



حوار أبوظبي بين الدول الآسيوية المرسلّة و المستقبلة للعمالة
Abu Dhabi Dialogue among the Asian Labor-Sending and Receiving Countries

Abu Dhabi Dialogue

Meeting of Senior Officials

11-12 May 2016, Dubai, UAE

Joint Communiqué

Senior Officials representing member governments of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue among Asian Countries of Labor Origin and Destination (ADD) held a regular meeting on 11 and 12 May 2016 in Dubai, UAE. In attendance were observers from non-member governments, international organizations, academic and non-government organizations and private sector actors. The list of attendees included government delegates from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bahrain, India, Indonesia, Kuwait, Malaysia, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, the Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, UAE and Vietnam, as well as an observer delegation from the GCC General Secretariat, the Executive Bureau of the GCC Council of Ministers of Labour, the government of Switzerland, IOM, ILO, ESCWA, Migrant Forum Asia, academic institutions in Bahrain, the United States and the UAE and private sector executives.

Following an opening session that was addressed by the heads of delegation of the Chair-in-Office, Kuwait, the Philippines and the UAE, the remainder of the first day was marked by two successive thematic meetings, moderated by Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The first centered on current and potential alternative models of labour recruitment and addressed the need for more effective government regulation to ensure the transparency of the recruitment processes and better protection of workers from unfair practices that subjects them to exploitation, and a more effective matching of job seekers and employment opportunities. A number of alternative recruitment models were explored, focusing on the need to redress the structural flaws of the currently prevalent models in the Asia-GCC corridors. Discussions addressed bilateral and multilateral government cooperation in vetting and deploying potentially fairer and more effective models that lend themselves to better regulation and leverage skill

development, certification and mutual recognition and the use of technology to improve the matching of workers and job opportunities. This first thematic meeting was led by researchers and experts from the University of California, the IOM, Migrant Forum Asia, the government of the Philippines, an independent expert from India, the ILO and Bayt.Com, a technology firm.

A second thematic panel discussion, led by experts from New York University Abu Dhabi, the Bahrain Center for Strategic and Geopolitical Studies, the ILO, the government of the UAE and SAP (Global technology company), dealt with the topic of labour mobility in destination labour markets. It highlighted the benefits of labour market flexibility and internal mobility to workers, employers and in terms of the broader labour market outcomes, notably in terms of increased labour productivity, better job matching and an improved skill mix. It explored model policies and operational tools to facilitate internal mobility and empower governments of destination countries to leverage its benefits.

Day two of the Senior Officials meeting, co-chaired by the Chair-in-Office, Kuwait, the Philippines and the UAE, began with a review of current ADD joint activities and initiatives, then proceeded to the sharing of newly launched unilateral initiatives and programs by member governments, with a view to identify new ADD-sponsored collaborative initiatives.

A report on the preliminary findings of an IOM-commissioned research project on the recruitment industry in the Asia-GCC corridors (with a focus on the recruitment of Nepali and Indian workers for placement in the UAE) was presented by the IOM delegation. It was followed by a presentation of a comprehensive and standardized pre-departure and post arrival orientation program that was developed by the government of the Philippines, and a progress report on the UAE-led pilot project on skill development, certification and recognition in partnership with UAE employers, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka-based training centers, third party quality control service providers and academic researchers, the government of Switzerland and international organizations.

The government of Indonesia led the exchange of good practices with a presentation on an electronic labour exchange platform, followed by the government of Saudi Arabia presenting on its “Musanid” system for the processing of the contracting and deployment in Saudi Arabia of domestic workers from Bangladesh, then a presentation of a case Study on India’s National Virtual Employment Marketplace, a presentation by the UAE on the establishment of visa centers in key geographical areas of countries of origin that will be mandated to process labour applications and contracting and the issuance of labour cards, a presentation by Bangladesh on “Good Practices in Migration Management”, a presentation by Sri Lanka on “Recent Initiatives on Welfare, Training, Protection and Reintegration of Workers and finally a presentation by the Philippine on “Onsite Training and Assessment of Overseas Filipino workers”.

Following a mid-day break, Senior Officials met in a concluding session, at the beginning of which the delegation of Sri Lanka asked to take the floor and announced the candidacy of the government of Sri Lanka to chair the next cycle of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue. Member government delegations unanimously welcomed Sri Lanka's candidacy and agreed to Sri Lanka's proposal to host a meeting of Senior officials and the 4th Ministerial consultation in Colombo on 23 -24 January 2017.

Senior officials proceeded to discuss a draft final communique that included proposed future programs and initiatives, their recommendations to the 4th Ministerial Consultation and a draft agenda for the said Consultation.

1. Proposed bilateral and multilateral joint initiatives and programs for the next ADD cycle

Senior Officials recalled that the Abu Dhabi dialogue is a government-led voluntary consultative process that brings together governments of Asian countries of labour origin and destination to promote constructive dialogue and cooperation. It follows that the implementation of programs and initiatives that are proposed in meetings of senior Officials is up to individual or groups of governments, with support by the Permanent Secretariat.

Accordingly, Senior Officials welcomed the announcements by several governments that they intend to jointly implement one or more of the following initiatives.

- 1.1.** Bilateral cooperation to develop alternative recruitment schemes and models that leverage the skilling of workers in COO's
- 1.2.** Bilateral cooperation to develop alternative recruitment schemes and models that leverage technology
- 1.3.** Bilateral cooperation in developing a model contract registration and validation system that ensures the transparency of employment contracts and eradicates the practice of contract substitution
- 1.4.** Bilateral cooperation of pairs of governments to localize the modules of the Pre-Departure/Post Arrival Worker Orientation Program. Senior Officials agreed to the formation of a Technical Working Group of focal points of Kuwait, Sri Lanka, the UAE and the Philippines to support the implementation of the program by pairs of interested COO/COD governments.
- 1.5.** Senior officials welcomed the announcement by the Permanent Secretariat (PS) that it will anchor the production of a comparative study of alternative recruitment schemes and direct the PS to prepare an executive summary of the study for presentation at the upcoming Ministerial Consultation

- 1.6. Senior Officials also welcomed the announcement by the PS to anchor the development of a model policy framework that leverages skilling in the formulation of admission, mobility and reintegration policies, and direct the PS to present the model framework at the upcoming Ministerial Consultation.

2. Recommendations by Senior Officials to the Ministerial Consultation

- 2.1. Senior officials agreed to recommend that the upcoming 4th Ministerial Consultation take up bilateral and multilateral cooperation to confront challenges that are associated with labour recruitment and consider alternatives to the prevalent recruitment models as a main item of the Consultation's agenda.
- 2.2. Senior officials agreed to recommend that the upcoming 4th Ministerial Consultation take up bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the field of skill development, certification and recognition and the leveraging of occupational skill recognition in the development of model admission and mobility policies, as a main item of the Consultation's agenda.

3. Draft agenda of the 4th Ministerial Consultation

- 3.1. Opening session
- 3.2. Report by Senior Officials
- 3.3. Presentation of the findings of the IOM-commissioned report on the recruitment industry in the Asia-GCC corridors
- 3.4. Review and discussion of an executive summary of a comparative study of alternative models of labour recruitment for Asia-GCC corridors
- 3.5. Review and discussion of a model policy framework that ties skilling in COO's to mutual recognition of original and acquired skills (up-skilling in COD's), admission policies, mobility policies and policies on the re-integration of returning workers in their home communities
- 3.6. Review and discussion of a paper on the leveraging of technology to improve the administration of cross-border labour mobility
- 3.7. Discussion of key areas of cooperation during the next ADD cycle
- 3.8. Closed meeting to address organizational matters
- 3.9. Final session and the adoption of a joint communique

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